

WE CLAIM:

1. A tie-down apparatus which is releasably attachable to a vehicle having an elongated, substantially rigid member, wherein said apparatus is a hinged clamp comprising:

i) a first clamp half having a first end and a second end;

ii) a second clamp half having a first end and a second end;

iii) a hinge pivotally connecting said first clamp half first end and said second clamp half first end, said hinge having an axis of rotation about which said first and second clamp halves are pivotable,

wherein in a closed position, said first clamp half second end and said second clamp half second end overlap, and in an open position said first clamp half second end and said second clamp half second end do not overlap;

iv) a first bore hole traversing the second end of said first clamp half; and

v) a second bore hole traversing the second end of said second clamp half,

wherein said first and second bore holes are aligned substantially parallel to said axis of rotation,

wherein in said closed position, said first and

second bore holes are substantially aligned to each other axially, and wherein in said closed position, a recessed interior surface of said clamp generally corresponds in shape to an exterior cross-sectional shape of said elongated, rigid member.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a resilient, scratch-resistant lining disposed on the recessed interior surface of said clamp.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said lining is selected from the group consisting of rubber, PVC tubing, polytetrafluoroethylene, and felt.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein recessed interior surface has a cross-sectional shape which is round, elliptical, regular polygonal, irregular polygonal, or polygonal with rounded corners.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein said recessed interior surface is substantially round.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said hinge comprises:

i) at least two interconnecting elements, wherein at least one interconnecting element is projected from the

first end of said first clamp half and at least one interconnecting element is projected from the first end of said second clamp half; and

ii) a hinge pin.

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7. The apparatus of claim 6, additionally comprising a hinge bushing disposed between said interconnecting elements and said hinge pin.

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8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said bushing is selected from the group consisting of a polyurethane bushing, a polytetrafluoroethylene bushing, and a rubber bushing.

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9. The apparatus of claim 1, additionally comprising a tie-down tensioning apparatus having (1) a first end having an attachment device for disposition through said first and second bore holes, when said first and second bore holes are axially aligned in said closed position, (2)

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a second end having an attachment device for attachment to a transport or storage apparatus, and (3) a tensioning device for applying a tightening force between said first end attachment device and said second end attachment device.

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10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein said tensioning device is a strap, cable, chain, or rod.